

# "Once a Thief Always a Thief" Disproved by Ex-Convicts Who Are Good Citizens To-Day

Instances of Work of Successfully Transforming Erstwhile Thieves in Body, Mind and Spirit Carried On by Religious and Charitable Agencies—Large Number of Former Outcasts Engaged in Rescue Movements

Missions of every kind, industrial homes, cottage settlements, all forms of social service for the "down and outers," seem to appeal more powerfully than anything else to these men who have been down and out themselves, and who throw themselves into the work of reclaiming other human wrecks.

**The Way Up From Prison.**  
By MAUD BALLINGTON BOOTH,  
Founder and Chief of the Volunteer Prison League.

THIS is the case of a former convict whose companions nicknamed him Skinny. During his five terms he served over twenty-one years in prison. He was a young man who had not had advantages, and in fact had stolen from childhood. During his last term he contracted rheumatism, was so bent and broken that he was unable for months to lie down and was permitted to do a little cobbling in his cell. At times his pain was so great that the physician would give him a morphine tablet, but instead of using them he kept them, intending to kill himself when he had saved enough of them.

"How many of these would it take to kill a man, doctor?" asked Skinny. "About twenty," was the reply. On the day that our message reached him he had accumulated nineteen of these tablets, and following our talk he went back to his cell and threw the nineteen away. After subsequent interviews he decided to come to our New York home, which is one of four maintained by us for released prisoners. He came out on crutches and he was indeed emaciated.

During the eleven months he remained with us he built up his shattered health, and when able to work was employed by a gentleman at \$3 a week. While his employer was able to give him a much larger wage he wanted to put Skinny to the test.

Day after day he proved his worth, and his wages were increased accordingly, so that at the end of a few years

he was in a position to marry. Wherever he has worked he has proved faithful and has given every satisfaction to his employers. He is at present holding a position of responsibility, is married and has two fine young daughters. He has lived an upright life for fifteen years.

Then there was the case of Tom, who had served two short terms in Sing Sing prior to 1889. Upon the evening of the day of his second discharge from Sing Sing Tom, wandering down the Bowery, met two of his friends, who invited him into one of the saloons to have a drink. After their third or fourth drink they were placed under arrest by detectives from Headquarters, who charged them with a robbery committed that very day.

Tom protested his innocence, saying that he was not the man, that he had only just come from Sing Sing, and in fact did not have time to do a job of that kind. Despite his denial he was locked up, for, unfortunately, Tom's appearance tallied almost exactly with the description of the missing third of the three men who had done the robbery.

On the day of trial the other two men pleaded guilty and received fifteen year sentences, at the same time affirming that Tom had no part in the robbery.

Tom again protested his innocence, saying that he had not committed the crime, that he had done nothing for which he should have been arrested. He declined to take a plea and decided to stand trial. On his record he was found guilty in short order, and as he put the county to the expense of a trial he was sentenced to twenty years in prison. He went back to Sing Sing sored and sullen and with a desire in his heart to get even with society for the wrong it had done him and a determination that he would get even when he came out.

How well I remember the many talks I have had with Tom, and how at times it seemed as though nothing that might be said would move him, but at last God working in his own mysterious way saw fit to change his heart. Tom put the evil desires and evil inclinations back of him and came out of prison a saved man.

It is now twelve years since Tom left prison. He is holding a good position in one of the towns of Pennsylvania. We hear from him frequently and the burden of his letters to us is that he thanks God that the Volunteer Prison League came into his life, and how he has wished that he had harkened earlier to the godly counsel and wise precepts.

John C— was liberated in 1907, having come under the operation of the parole law which permitted life prisoners who had served twenty years and whose conduct had been good to be paroled. For twenty-seven years John had been an inmate of Sing Sing prison and for many years of that time hope and John were strangers.

We went into that prison carrying a message of hope to such poor souls as he, and it was with gladness that he received the message, and he has told us how he hoped and prayed that the time would come when he would secure his release, and thanks to the wise measures instituted by our lawmakers he was one of the first who came under the operation of the "life" parole law. He now holds a position of trust and responsibility in one of the largest corporations in New York city.

One more example, and this one is 83 years old. He was, I think, the dean of the prisoners of this State, for he had spent forty-seven years of his life in the prison. In Danemora every one knew old Frank. He too was a beneficiary of the life men's parole law, for he is now much bent and at times somewhat feeble. He is very proud of his kitchen garden and the fact that he is the organizer for our services.

Last summer he went as caretaker to some vacant flats in Brooklyn. He rented them all, and the agent let him have another house with the same result. He returned to the home with \$30 of his earnings, and unknown to us in the winter spent \$7 of that amount for flowers for our grounds in the spring.

Now has this all been worth while? I could take up all the space of this



Evangeline Booth, commander Salvation Army of United States.

issue of THE SUN tells the story of the reformation of men who at some time or other have believed that every man's hand was against them. Our league has proved that good can come out of prisons. If all that has been made public about our prisoners during the past few weeks will but find lodgment in the hearts and minds of your readers it will mean more for those behind the gray walls than one can well imagine.

**Men Who Rose Into New Life.**  
By EVANGELINE BOOTH,  
Commander of the Salvation Army  
in the United States.

THE story of Harold Springer is a romance full of tragedy, pathos, misery and despair—all these he was finally forced to yield to hope. A little more than a year ago Springer occupied a cell with Porter Charlton in the Hudson county jail. It is said that he descended so low as to evoke from the tongue of the wife murderer an expression of bitter contempt.

"Why Springer," said Charlton, "you are so low down that you are not even square with your cell mate." He started life with the brightest possible prospects. Graduating from West Point, he entered the United States army as a Lieutenant and was ordered to Cuba. There he served with distinction and was speedily promoted to Captain. He was recommended to the notice of the then Secretary of War, and was introduced to President McKinley. He was sent to the Philippines, but was ordered to return to Washington before he had a chance to do much service for his country in the archipelago.

When he returned to Washington Springer met with a reverse which he was weak enough to allow to drive him to drink. Then he plunged into excesses that produced moral and almost mental chaos. He says to-day that he was a moral maniac. He had no moral perspective. The descent was rapid, the depth to which he fell was so low that years afterward he said he was obliged to "reach up to touch bottom." He was a very miracle in degradation. "I used to lie, great, drink—do anything that would further degrade my moral nature," said Springer. "Even to-day, now that I occupy a good position with one of the large railways, very few persons really credit my conversion. When Porter Charlton was informed of

it he shook his head and said: 'I might believe in the conversion of Judas, but Springer! That's impossible.' But the miracle of conversion is no less a fact than the miracle of degradation." Springer, in the early part of June, 1912, was discharged from prison. He came over to New York to celebrate the event. He stayed in a saloon until 3 o'clock in the evening, when all his money was gone. Then he was pitched head foremost out of the establishment by orders of the bartender. The fall sobered him sufficiently to make him aware of his circumstances.

"I will make a hole in the water," he declared, and he started to walk rapidly across Fourteenth street in the direction of the Hudson.

At the door of the Salvation Army hall on West Fourteenth street he was attracted by the singing. He entered. He was impressed. He prayed and professed himself desirous of living a better life. While none doubted the power of God to save him few believed that he was other than a drunken derelict bent on shamming repentance in order to obtain the price of a meal and bed.

But Springer was turned over to Major Winchell of the Jersey City Industrial Home. He was forced, after recovering from the effects of his debauch, to work. He did the work assigned him gladly. It was hard, laborious, but it had a soothing effect on the man. The Salvation Army believes that work, next to the redeeming grace of God, is the most effective cure for vice and vicious tendencies that can be found.

In a short time Springer became a humble clerk for a railway. He has been promoted three times since then. The honor of the company is to a certain extent in his hands. He is given an unlimited expense account and is entrusted with the negotiation of large contracts.

The Rev. F. H. B. was pastor of a thriving church in Philadelphia. His wife died after presenting him with a baby. Later he became involved in a scandal which was of such a character as to render his pastorate untenable. He resigned. In a short time he was a physical and moral wreck. In New York he was picked up by the police and sent to Blackwell's Island.

After his release he came to us, frankly told his story and accepted our proffered aid. One of the most eloquent and scholarly ministers in Philadelphia, whose letter is on file at the prison department, wrote Capt. Anderson urging him not to give the fallen pastor any money, but to accord him such assistance as would enable him to obtain some sort of a foothold. The assistance was given, advice was tendered, the man was induced to believe that all hope was not dead, and he soon recovered some of his lost ground.

To-day he occupies a prominent position with a large organization engaged in the work of human uplift. He is a forceful speaker and an indefatigable worker. His faith in human nature and in the ability of the God assisted man to rise on "his dead self" is one of his most potent assets.

George F. Warnell had been so frequently in prison that he could not enter a town without receiving immediate orders from the chief of police to depart. He came to us saying that he could find no place upon which he could set his weary feet. We interceded for him, obtained a place for him on a farm in New Jersey. He proved faithful and to-day owns the farm and is doing a general and prosperous real estate business. Sometimes he visits us and often send us a donation for the purpose of helping others who were as unfortunate or wicked as himself.

W. A. G.—Anybody can establish the identity of this man if he will trouble to buy and peruse a volume called "From Boniface to Burglar." Some years ago after a career of crime almost unparalleled in his special field he came to us and said he was ready to "lay down his arms of rebellion" against society and submit to society's proper restraints. He wrote three books and the remainder on his life was spent in doing good.

**Mike Kelly and His Pal.**  
By LEE PARSONS DAVIS,  
Assistant District Attorney of Westchester County.

NOW this is the story of Mike Kelly, a big, strapping, warm hearted fellow, who was night watchman of a large manufacturing concern when my friend Doddsworth became general manager of the plant. Of course Kelly isn't his real name, nor is Doddsworth my friend's name, but they will answer as well as if they were the real names.

Soon after Mr. Doddsworth took hold

## Where Society Gathers for Its Clambake Cooks Preparing Feast for Members of Newport's Exclusive Clambake Club



**F**OLLOWING swift on the recent revolt of convicts in Sing Sing, their defiance of warden and keepers, their threats to dynamite the prison and effect a general delivery has come an insistent question: "Is it possible to reform a convict and make a good citizen out of him?"

Take that same Sing Sing with its army of men incarcerated for crimes of almost every kind—burglars, highwaymen, habitual ne'er do wells, common thieves, housebreakers, second story men, pickpockets, bank robbers, bigamists, bunco steers, grafters of every degree, accomplished swindlers of every kind—take this mass of depraved humanity—is it possible really to effect a reformation in more than an occasional instance? Is it possible to restore a majority of these prisoners to places of respect and responsibility in the world of freedom?

Possibly a great majority of those who asked the question knew that certain religious organizations, welfare societies and other charitable agencies have long asserted that they actually can, and do, succeed in reforming criminals, men and women of the most hardened types; that they restore them to their families and see them become members of society—respected, trusted, and sometimes honored. But the average man is apt to be somewhat sceptical of such statements. What he asks for is plain, definite, convincing, indisputable facts.

Those who ask the question and demand proof are, for the most part, practical, level headed men of affairs. In order to ascertain whether a definite, incontrovertible answer to their doubts can be obtained inquiry has been made of agencies and individuals who have much to do with convicts discharged from prisons and penitentiaries. In each instance the attitude of those questioned was one of surprise that at this day there should be any doubt regarding the absolute reformation of former convicts.

If you have any misgivings on the point go to the McAuley Mission, down in Water street, and talk with Mr. Wyburn, the superintendent. Go to the headquarters of the Salvation Army in Fourteenth street, and talk with Major Anderson, in charge of the prison gate. Go to Twenty-eighth street, where the Volunteers of America administer their work in behalf of humanity, and talk with Ballington Booth. Step on a train and run up to the court house in White Plains, and there talk with Assistant District Attorney Lee Parsons Davis.

Do this and you may hear of a multitude of definite instances of former convicts who have been transformed in body, mind and spirit. If you cannot make such personal investigation read the accounts of what has been accomplished.

If you call on John H. Wyburn, superintendent of the McAuley Mission, and ask, as did the writer, whether he can give definite instances of former convicts who have been restored to good citizenship he will take you to his office, pull open a big, deep drawer filled to the brim with carefully kept records and tell you to help yourself. Here is the record of one man, taken at random:

Born and brought up in New York, where his father ran a saloon in Washington street for thirty-five years.

Began to steal before ten years of age, and started career by tapping tills.

From that began to snatch pocketbooks from crowds hurrying to ferry.

Father died and left several thousands of dollars to son, who went to Philadelphia and soon afterward robbed a post office in Pennsylvania; was arrested and acquitted.

Went to California. Convicted of highway robbery and sentenced to San Quentin prison. After serving sentence had to leave State at once, as there were sufficient charges against him to send him up for life.

Went to Oregon to keep on in highway business, but had to get out.

Arrived in Montana for highway robbery and sentenced to five years in penitentiary.

Released at end of time and went to Tacoma. Arrested on several charges of burglary and highway robbery. Broke jail and took all hands out with him.

Arrested in Olympia for robbing a jewelry store, and again escaped from jail, taking all other prisoners with him.

Back to Seattle and arrested on two charges of highway robbery, but got away.

Went back to try and get his pals out. Had nearly succeeded by tunnelling into jail when a Federal prisoner "squealed" on the plan. Sent to Walla Walla prison for seven years.

In Walla Walla, bribed a man to bring in a horse. With other convicts at work in the yard had it all arranged to seize warden, throw him on an engine that came into yard and escape. Plan miscarried and both pals were shot dead by his men on engine. Surviving ringleader given eighteen months solitary confinement. When released he was nearly dead; was taken to train and shipped out of the State. As soon as possible returned to Washington.

Upper picture, removing the tarpaulin; lower picture, clambake ready to be served to members of society colony.

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